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IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT of Prospective College Teachers

By WILLIAM D. GRAY
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THE SHORTAGE of qualified college teachers has been described as the most critical problem in education facing this country today. In 1957, the University of Pittsburgh, seeking a solution to this problem, instituted a Special Fellowship Program designed to identify, encourage, direct, and assist outstanding students who might be interested in college teaching careers in the natural and social sciences and in the humanities.

The program, developed by Roy Heath, director, University Counseling Center, becomes available to students upon nomination by individual faculty members at any time after the completion of the freshman year. Nominated students are briefed on the program at an orientation meeting and, if interested, submit personal data sheets, transcripts, and freshman test scores to an evaluation committee.

The candidate is interviewed every semester thereafter by one of 11 committees, each consisting of three faculty members, representing the natural and social sciences, the humanities, and engineering. The interviews are designed to prepare the student for future interviews with selection committees of various fellowship programs, such as those of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. The interviewing committee informs the candidate of his apparent strengths and weaknesses and makes suggestions for improvement. For example, a science member of the committee may encourage a physics major to do outside reading in literature in order to achieve better balance in his preparation. At the end of each semester the candidate is rated as Special Fellowship Material, Substantial Status, Tenuous Status, or To Be Dropped.

The student is advised to obtain the best training possible rather than to concentrate on high grades. With the assistance of the evaluation committees and a faculty adviser, he determines his goals, selects a graduate school, and makes himself known to several faculty members so that they will be more than superficially acquainted with him when he is seeking letters of reference.

Thus far, the students participating in the program have enjoyed a high degree of success in the competition for graduate fellowships. In the 1959-60 competition for Woodrow Wilson Fellowships, for example, 13 of the 18 nominees from the University of Pittsburgh were participants in the Special Fellowship Program and five were not. Of the 13 participants, six received Woodrow Wilson Fellowships. The five nonparticipants all were rejected on the basis of their academic records, personal statements, and letters of reference.

The Wilson Foundation, recognizing the general value of the plan, is now assisting other universities and colleges in working out similar programs. Meetings already have been held on the campuses of a number of universities—among them, Columbia, Syracuse, California (Los Angeles), Boston, and the universities of Utah, Maryland, and Texas. It is the hope of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation that the "Pittsburgh Plan" will become a possible model for similar programs, especially at larger universities.

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